sector have been opened up for foreign direct investment. Private parties including foreign companies are also permitted to market transportation fuels subject to a minimum investment of Rs. 2000 crores in specified areas. Similarly foreign direct investment is also permitted, indeed encouraged, in the gas sector.

(b) Investments in oil and gas sector have been made by several foreign companies. These include, amongst others, multinationals such as BG; Cairn Energy (United Kingdom), Niko Resources and Canoro (Canada) in the upstream; national oil company of Iran in refining and Shell in marketing.

(c) For upstream investments, roadshows under the fifth round of New Exploration Licencing Policy have been held in London, Dubai, Houston, Calgary, Moscow, Amsterdam, Perth and Kuala Lumpur. The outcome of the roadshows in terms of attracting investments from abroad will be known after bids close on 31st May, 2005. For investment in refining and gas sectors, discussions are in progress with Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Iran. Other countries have also indicated interest on which follow up action is being taken.

Import of crude oil at lower prices

†2885. SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD:
DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is the fact that in view of the increasing prices of crude oil in the international market and this becoming a regular feature, it is the foremost need that the country gets crude oil at lower prices;

(b) if so, the reaction of Government in this regard;

(c) whether Government have made efforts for making contacts with other countries in the world to get cheaper crude oil;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) whether it is a fact that private companies in the country have also taken initiative in this regard?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (e) More than two-thirds of the imported crude in India comes from West Asian countries where prices are fixed at the Official Selling Price (OSP). The rest of the crude is procured on a spot basis through tenders floated by PSUs. Both OSP and tender price are guided by prevailing international oil prices. Public and private sector Oil Companies explore the possibility of tapping new sources of crude supply from different regions of the world on a continuous basis, particularly the Gulf, Mediterranean, Far East and West Africa and grades which are identified as suitable are imported subject to economic viability.

Currently, there is no well-developed Oil Products Market in Asia. There being well-organized petroleum and petroleum products markets in North America and West Europe, with West Texas Intermediate (WTI) and Brent (dated) as well-recognized markers, buyers in these markets often secure a discount not available to Asian consumer countries. In view of this, the question of the development of an Asian petroleum and petroleum products market was discussed at the first Round Table of Asian Oil Ministers on Stability, Security and Sustainability through Regional Cooperation in New Delhi on 6 January, 2005. Accordingly, a study on the development of an Asian petroleum and petroleum products market was proposed at the Round Table.

Dismal crude oil production

†2886. SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD:
SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that inspite of abundance of crude oil reserves in the country for the last several years, no specific increase is being effected in its production;

(b) if so, the reaction of Government in this regard and the reasons for not raising the production; and

(c) the quantity of crude oil produced in the country during the years 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.